

its home in in the First State and continues to thrive while serving customers in the First State and around the world. Tens of thousands of Delawareans rely on the good jobs that our State's financial services provide, jobs that have enhanced the lives of many. Dave is known for being honest, and even if someone didn't always like the answer, they respected him for doing the right thing, not what was easy or expedient. He also is admired for his positive, can-do attitude regardless of the magnitude of the challenges he and the members of the Delaware Bankers Association have faced over the years.

Over more than two decades, David has worked with three Governors and testified before and advised 11 separate Delaware General Assemblies on a variety of banking legislative matters, including credit cards, trust administration, interstate banking and branching, foreclosure mediation, and consumer protection. In 2001, David led the Delaware Bankers Association in a cooperative venture with the University of Delaware's Center for Economic Education and Entrepreneurship, the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia, and the Consumer Credit Counseling Services of Delaware and Maryland to form Keys to Financial Success, a high school credit course focusing on financial literacy. The program is still offered today in 28 high schools in Delaware with more than 4,200 students participating. In 2004, David was elected to a 1-year chairmanship of the State Association Division of the American Bankers Association. In this role, he became the national spokesperson for the 50 State bankers associations and held a seat on the American Bankers Association board of directors. He is the only Delawarean ever to serve in this national leadership role. His service in that role is a source of pride to our State.

While David is passionate about banking, he actually began his career in education and studied to become a college professor. He possesses a remarkable ability to write clearly and communicate effectively. Those skills have helped him go on to such a successful career in banking, in part because of his ability to explain highly complex issues to almost anyone and everyone. His passion for education can be seen in his own academic achievements. After receiving his bachelor's degree from Siena College in New York, he went on to receive a master's degree from the University of West Florida and a postgraduate certificate in higher education administration from the University of Pennsylvania. Prior to his appointment at the Delaware Bankers Association, he served as executive director of the Delaware Chapter of the American Institute of Banking. He began his tenure at Delaware AIB in 1985 and oversaw the educational unit.

Through his tireless efforts, David Bakerian has made a positive difference in not only the banking com-

munity but the education community and the community writ large. I am delighted to salute David and thank him for his many years of service to Delaware and to congratulate him on a truly remarkable and distinguished career. I know he looks forward to spending more time with his grandchildren in his garden and refining his culinary skills in the kitchen. In closing, on behalf of the people of Delaware, as well as on behalf of Senator COONS and Congressman CARNEY, I want to wish David and his wife Pam, his son Nick, and his daughters Alex and Catherine, along with his son-in-law Jeff and his grandchildren Adam and Madeline, the very best in all that lies ahead.●

#### TRIBUTE TO DEBORAH BLONG

● Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, I wish to commend Deborah Blong from Missoula, MT, who was recently recognized as the recipient of the American Network of Community Options and Resources 2015 Direct Support Professional, DSP, of the Year Award for the State of Montana.

This award recognizes Ms. Blong's dedication and hard work every day in her efforts to support members of the Montana community with intellectual, developmental, and other significant disabilities. Ms. Blong's selflessness is clear. In addition to taking care of her husband who suffers from Parkinson's disease, she manages a home with eight residents—four have Prader-Willi syndrome and three others struggle with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. She works 14-hour days, often 6 to 7 days a week.

Deborah Blong makes a difference each and every day for those whom she cares for. For 20 years, Ms. Blong has been a positive influence on those around her. For her efforts, Ms. Blong has earned the thanks of a grateful State.●

#### CONGRATULATING NOELLE VERHELST

● Mr. HELLER. Mr. President, today, I wish to congratulate Noelle Verhelst on being selected not only as Nevada's Cherry Blossom Princess for the 2015 Centennial Cherry Blossom Festival in Washington, DC, but also on being selected as U.S. Cherry Blossom Queen. Ms. Verhelst is the first Nevada Cherry Blossom Princess to be selected as U.S. Cherry Blossom Queen, a well-deserved accolade.

Ms. Verhelst is a shining example of someone who truly cherishes the Silver State. She was raised in Las Vegas and attended the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, receiving her bachelor's degree in political science. Prior to moving to Washington, DC, she worked in Governor Brian Sandoval's Office of Economic Development. She currently works for Congressman JOE HECK (NV-3) as a legislative correspondent. Her dedication and service to the great State of Nevada are greatly appreciated.

Ms. Verhelst was chosen in February by the Nevada State Society to represent Nevada in the National Conference of State Societies and the Cherry Blossom Princess Program. Nevada is proud to support one of our own as she joins young women from across the Nation in community involvement and educational, leadership, and cultural activities throughout the year. In April, she was selected as U.S. Cherry Blossom Queen at the Official Cherry Blossom Grand Ball and Coronation of the United States Cherry Blossom Queen, a tradition that began in 1948. As U.S. Cherry Blossom Queen, Ms. Verhelst will have the opportunity to represent both the Silver State and the United States while she visits the Japan Prime Minister, Shinzo Abe, during her official United States Cherry Blossom Queen Goodwill Ambassador trip in May.

I am proud to recognize Ms. Verhelst on her excellent representation of Nevada in her role as Nevada Cherry Blossom Princess and U.S. Cherry Blossom Queen. She should be proud of her achievements.

I join the citizens of Nevada in congratulating Ms. Verhelst on her accomplishment and wish her all the best during her United States Cherry Blossom Queen Goodwill Ambassador trip and in all of her future endeavors.●

#### CONGRATULATING DR. COLLEEN CRIPPS

● Mr. HELLER. Mr. President, today, I wish to congratulate Dr. Colleen Cripps on her retirement after serving the great State of Nevada for 25 years with the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection, NDEP. It gives me great pleasure to recognize her years of hard work and commitment to making the Silver State the best it can be.

Dr. Cripps stands as a true example of someone who has spent many years dedicated to her home State. She was born in Ely, NV, and she received her master of arts in public administration and her doctor of philosophy in biochemistry from the University of Nevada, Reno. Throughout her career with NDEP, Dr. Cripps served as chief of the Bureau of Air Quality; deputy administrator, responsible for the agency's Air, Waste, and Federal Facilities Bureau; and acting administrator and administrator of NDEP. Her positive legacy in the department will be felt for years to come.

Dr. Cripps' commitment to her cause goes beyond her career. She served on numerous industry-related boards, such as the National Association of Clean Air Agencies, NACAA's, executive board from 2003 to 2009, serving as president, and the Western States Air Resources Council's board, serving on the executive committee and as vice president. She also represented Nevada in the Western Regional Air Partnership and was one of Nevada's observers in the Western Climate Initiative. Her years of service to the Silver State are invaluable.